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ACTION WHA-00

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| INFO | LOG-00 | MFA-00 | NP-00 | AID-00 | CEA-01 | CIAE-00 | COME-00 |
| | CTME-00 | DODE-00 | DOEE-00 | DOTI-00 | SRPP-00 | DS-00 | EB-00 |
| | EXIM-01 | E-00 | FAAE-00 | VC-00 | FRB-00 | H-01 | TEDE-00 |
| | INR-00 | ITC-01 | LAB-01 | L-00 | CAC-00 | VCE-00 | AC-01 |
| | DCP-01 | NSAE-00 | OCS-03 | OMB-01 | DHS-00 | OPIC-01 | PA-00 |
| | PM-00 | PRS-00 | ACE-00 | P-00 | SP-00 | IRM-00 | SSO-00 |
| | SS-00 | STR-00 | TRSE-00 | USIE-00 | ASDS-00 | EPAE-00 | PMB-00 |
| | DSCC-00 | PRM-00 | DRL-02 | G-00 | NFAT-00 | SAS-00 | /014W |

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O 022206Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8787
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY
NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003833

NSC FOR LLORENS
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2012
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PAGE 02 CARACA 03833 01 OF 02 022259Z
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, CASC, ASEC, VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA'S STRIKE CONTINUING TO DECEMBER 3

REF: CARACAS 3827

CLASSIFIED BY: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION FREDERICK B. COOK, REASONS 1.5 (B) & (D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) THE VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION-LED STRIKE WILL CONTINUE THROUGH DECEMBER 3, FEDECAMARAS PRESIDENT CARLOS FERNANDEZ

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AND VENEZUELAN WORKER'S CONFEDERATION PRESIDENT CARLOS ORTEGA
ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 2. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] THE DEMOCRATIC
COORDINATING COMMITTEE (DCC) CONDEMNED GOV INTERFERENCE
DURING THE STRIKE AND CALLED FOR A "CACEROLAZO" PROTEST
(BANGING POTS AND PANS, HONKING HORNS, ETC.) DECEMBER 2 AT
2000. FOR ITS PART, THE GOV CONTINUES TO CALL THE STRIKE A
FAILURE AND THE GOV-ORGANIZED "MEGA-MARKET" IN DOWNTOWN
CARACAS A SUCCESS. EMBOFFS OBSERVED AN EAST-WEST SPLIT
ADHERENCE TO THE STRIKE IN CARACAS, WITH GREATER CONCURRENCE
IN THE EAST OF THE CITY. END SUMMARY.

CTV, FEDECAMARAS FAVOR EXTENDING STRIKE

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2. (U) FEDECAMARAS PRESIDENT CARLOS FERNANDEZ AND VENEZUELAN
WORKER'S CONFEDERATION (CTV) PRESIDENT CARLOS ORTEGA
ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 2 THAT THE STRIKE WILL CONTINUE INTO
DECEMBER 3. THEY DID NOT SPECIFY FOR HOW LONG. THEY
REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESSURING PRESIDENT CHAVEZ INTO
ELECTIONS. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER, LUIS ALFONZO DAVILA,
PUBLICLY CRITICIZED THE STRIKE AS A STRATEGY TO AFFECT THE
INTERVENTION BY THE OAS OR SOME OTHER INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION. DAVILA ASSERTED THAT PEOPLE HAD NOT GONE ALONG
WITH THE STRIKE AND WARNED THAT THE GOV WOULD RESORT TO LEGAL
MEANS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION.

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[REDACTED]

4. (U) CTV PRESIDENT ORTEGA ALSO CALLED THE STRIKE A SUCCESS.
HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE TO CONVERT THE
"PASSIVE, CIVIC PROTEST" INTO AN ACTIVE ONE IN THE FACE OF
GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION. CITING DETENTIONS
AND INTIMIDATION OF BUSINESS-OWNERS BY GOV REPRESENTATIVES,
ORTEGA CLAIMED THE OPPOSITION NEEDS TO DEFEND FREEDOM BY

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TAKING TO THE STREETS IN PROTEST. DEMOCRATIC COORDINATING
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COMMITTEE (DCC) SPOKESPERSON, JOSE LUIS FARIAS, TOLD
REPORTERS THE DCC ALSO DENOUNCED THE "MILITARY PRESSURE"
EXERCISED BY THE GOV DURING THE STRIKE. ALSO ALLUDING TO
DETENTIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY DECEMBER 2, FARIAS SPECIFICALLY
NOTED THE DETENTION OF TACHIRA STATE DEPUTY NELSON CHACIN BY
AN ARMED GROUP HEADED BY MVR DEPUTIES JULIO GARCIA AND LUIS
TASCON. FARIAS CALLED UPON THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE TO STAGE A
"CACEROLAZO" PROTEST (BANGING POTS AND PANS, HONKING HORNS,
ETC.) DECEMBER 2 AT 2000.

5. (C)

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TWO LABOR LEADERS TOLD
POLOFF DECEMBER 2 THAT FOR NOW THE CTV PREFERS TO KEEP THE
STRIKE PASSIVE, I.E., NO CALL FOR PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. BUT
IF THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT FAILS TO YIELD, THEY PREDICTED THE
STRIKE WOULD BE EXTENDED FURTHER. [REDACTED] ASSERTED THAT
NEITHER THE OPPOSITION NOR THE GOV COULD ENDURE A STRIKE
BEYOND 72 HOURS. [REDACTED] SAID
ORTEGA IS MORE RADICAL THAN MOST CTV DIRECTORS IN WANTING AN
INDEFINITE STRIKE BEYOND 72 HOURS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 003833

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SUBJECT: VENEZUELA'S STRIKE CONTINUING TO DECEMBER 3

[REDACTED] (NOTE: WITH 1.2
MILLION MEMBERS, THE CTV REPRESENTS ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF
VENEZUELAN WORKERS.) THEY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE STRIKE
RESPONSE WAS WEAKEST AMONG THE STATE-RUN INDUSTRIES IN
BOLIVAR STATE. [REDACTED] ASSERTED THAT THE GOV WAS HARASSING
BUSINESSES TO STAY OPEN AND WORKERS TO STAY ON THE JOB. HE
WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESUMED ARREST OF A CTV FEDERATION
PRESIDENT AND HIS WIFE IN FALCON STATE. HE LIKEWISE SHOWED
POLOFF A LETTER SUPPOSEDLY SENT BY LIBERATOR MAYOR AND CHAVEZ
LOYALIST FREDDY BERNAL TO EVERY PRO-GOVERNMENT MAYOR AND
GOVERNOR CALLING FOR A QUOTA IN CARS - SOME 18,000 VEHICLES
IN ALL - TO BE USED TO DRIVE AROUND CARACAS AND DEMONSTRATE
THE STRIKE IS INEFFECTIVE.

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GOV CLAIMS "MEGA-MARKET" A SUCCESS

7. (U) INTERIOR MINISTER DIOSDADO CABELLO TOLD REPORTERS THE
"BOLIVARIAN MEGA-MARKET" SPONSORED BY THE GOV IN DOWNTOWN
CARACAS HAD BEEN A SUCCESS AND THAT THE OPPOSITION'S STRIKE
HAD "NO MORE THAN 15 PERCENT PARTICIPATION" DECEMBER 2.
CABELLO SAID THE GOV FOUND THAT "FRIENDS AND ENEMIES" OF THE
GOVERNMENT HAD SHOWN UP DOWNTOWN FOR THE "MEGA-MARKET" - THE
SUCCESS OF WHICH WAS EVIDENT BY THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
AND THE LEVEL OF COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY TAKING PLACE. ACCORDING
TO PRESS REPORTS, THE GOV IS SELLING GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED
PRODUCTS, INCLUDING PACKAGES CALLED "BOLSAS REVOLUCIONARIAS"
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("REVOLUTIONARY BAGS") OF BASIC CONSUMABLE GOODS AND ITEMS
NECESSARY TO MAKE TRADITIONAL VENEZUELAN CHRISTMAS FOODS, AT
THE MARKET WHICH WILL BE OPEN INTO THE EVENING DECEMBER 2.

8. (U) CABELLO ALSO TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE COUNTRY,
INCLUDING THE VENEZUELAN OIL INDUSTRY, WAS FUNCTIONING AS
NORMAL "WITHOUT A SINGLE PROBLEM." HE JUSTIFIED THE BRIEF
DETENTION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER IN THE EL PALITO OIL
REFINERY, SAYING THAT COMPETENT AUTHORITIES WERE FORCED TO
DETAIN THE WORKER WHO TRIED TO BLOCK THE ENTRANCE FROM
EMPLOYEES WHO WANTED TO WORK.

STRIKE OBSERVATIONS

9. (C) EMBOFFS OBSERVED THAT ADHERENCE TO THE OPPOSITION'S
STRIKE WAS SPLIT IN CARACAS DECEMBER 2. IN EASTERN CARACAS,
THE STRIKE SEEMED TO BE 85-95 PERCENT EFFECTIVE WITH ONLY
BAKERIES, SMALL EATERIES, SMALL AUTO PARTS AND REPAIR SHOPS,
AND GAS STATIONS REMAINING OPEN. PDVSA PARKING LOTS WERE 90
PERCENT EMPTY IN THIS AREA. MOVING WEST ACROSS THE CITY,
EMBOFFS OBSERVED THAT THE SHOPPING DISTRICT OF SABANA GRANDE
WAS MORE ACTIVE, WITH STREET VENDORS OUT BUT PERHAPS NOT IN
THE USUAL NUMBERS. WESTERN CARACAS, HOWEVER, WAS OPEN FOR
BUSINESS WITH MANY PEOPLE IN THE STREETS ENGAGED IN
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY.

COMMENT

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